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# Red Cross Gets Role In Ransom

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WASHINGTON — The American Red Cross Thursday stepped into negotiations for the release of 1,113 Bay of Pigs veterans in Cuban prisons.

James Donovan, the New York attorney representing the Families Committee, said the Red Cross has agreed to accept contributions for the ransom and is cooperating with the Families Committee.

"We are most optimistic for an early conclusion of this mission," Donovan said.

"The committee is extremely gratified and our optimism was increased by President Kennedy's expression on Wednesday in support of our efforts."

Donovan said the aim is to get the prisoners back to Miami by Christmas.

He refused to disclose what arrangements have been made for bringing them out. He would not say whether the committee has already chartered a boat.

Donovan said he will go to Havana soon. "When I go down, I'm going down to bring them out," he added.

Donovan confirmed that the

Red Cross would "enormously facilitate" raising the ransom supplies.

This arrangement will eliminate "all sorts of... as well as other difficulties," Donovan said.

Because its entrance into the negotiations coincides with its traditional role as a humanitarian organization, the Red Cross already has the machinery to cope with the problem.

Donovan did not elaborate, but it also is possible that contributions to the Red Cross are more clearly deductible under federal tax laws than those to the private committee.

Donovan said a substantial amount of the supplies already has been received by the Red Cross, and more is coming in. The ransom consists of pharmaceuticals, surgical supplies and baby foods, including evaporated milk.

The total ransom demanded by Castro might have a value of 62 million dollars if purchased in Havana, but at wholesale and discount prices in the U.S. the cost is estimated at about 17 million dollars.

President Kennedy said at his press conference Wednesday that he is "very sympathetic" to the private efforts being made to ransom the prisoners.

Donovan said this statement paved the way for efforts to proceed.

"We have had to wait until we got assurance that what was being done was in no way inconsistent with national policy," he explained.

One informed source cautioned against undue optimism, however, noting that "we have been up and down this hill with Castro since

the original tractor deal in May of 1961."

Another source reported that Donovan may have a "substitution problem," in that Donovan has received from the Castro government what was described as a "very specific and detailed list."

Informed sources indicated that government funds are involved in the ransom, but it was not determined whether some government surplus funds will be used.

The official Red Cross statement on the prisoners said:

"At the request of the Cuban Families Committee for Liberation of Prisoners, the Red Cross is concerned with the welfare of people in distress throughout the world. The American National Red Cross is accepting donations of baby food and similar foodstuffs, medicines, and medical supplies from manufacturers in the U.S. for shipment to Cuba."

"The American National Red Cross has agreed to make available its facilities to receive the donations and assist in their shipment to Cuba. These materials are appropriate for use in caring for the ill and in feeding the very young in that country. The food and medicines will be shipped by air and by ship."

"When the released prisoners return to the U.S., the American National Red Cross is prepared to provide its normal welfare services, such as canteen service, communications with relatives who have been resettled in various communities, and clothing. Some of these services have been provided as part of the regular refugee reception program which has been going on for some time."